

H A P P I N E S S

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P O E T I C A L E S S A Y.

A

P O E T I C A L E S S A Y.

OF EMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

L O N D O N

Printed by T. and J. W. PAIRMAN, in Black-Street.

For J. JOHNSON and Co. in Pall-mall-Road; Wm. DODDLEY, in Pall-mall; and
Mr. WHITE, in Fleet-Street: and also by MISS MARRIAGE, in Cambridge.

MDCCLXVI

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POETICAL ESSAY.

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13

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By Mr. M E E N, *K*

OF EMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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MDCCLXVI.

HAPPINESS:

A

POETICAL ESSAY.

By MR. M. E. N.

OF EMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

[H]

L O N D O N :

Printed by T. and J. Bland, in Black-Prints;
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MDCCLXVI

H A P P I N E S S :

P O E T I C A L E S S A Y.

O THOU, the first, the last best wish of man,
Thou at whose shrine bends ev'ry knee devout,
Efflux of good! thee, HAPPINESS, I sing,
Thee supplicate, my patroness, my theme;
Far worthier invocation than the nine,
The fabled nine that quaff castalian streams;

B

Far

Far nobler theme than arms and chieftains fam'd

To scatter desolation o'er the earth,

And fate their lust with blood and victory.

Ye cares, ye passions that distract the soul,

10

That bar the ear from wisdom's sacred lore,

Avaunt: O give me to myself this hour,

Firm in myself collected let me stand,

And 'mid' the dang'rous labyrinths of life

Investigate the path to Happiness.

15

Who, tho' base native of remotest climes,

In the sage schools of gen'rous arts untrain'd,

And discipline that forms the ductile mind

For social life and friendship's sacred ties,

Yet feels not all his soul impel'd amain

20

T'wards Happiness, each action's aim and end?

It must be so; mankind must feel, must own

The gen'ral impulse giv'n by nature's God,

When first with vital pow'rs his breath inspir'd

The

The lifeless clay, and stamp'd his image, man. 25

But, ah! how fall'n, how devious hath he err'd

From that primeval Happiness ordain'd

The endless lot of heav'n-directed man:

Had not temptation in too trait'rous guise

Seduc'd to foul revolt—and still, alas! 30

Temptations then unthought of importune

Each appetite, and urge from bliss assur'd

The weak, unstable mind.—Say then what clew

In these degen'rate days, what kindly clew

Best marks the pilgrim's way; where must he steer 35

To reach the port and gain th' expected prize?

Yes, that's the question; for the vain pursuit

Of fancy'd means defeats the promis'd end.

Thus the benighted trav'ler with quick pace

And pensive thought pursues his homeward way, 40

Or hopes at least; when, lo! a black'ning storm

Hovers around and on him bursts amain.

Fierce roars the northern blast, and from his way
Impels him onward ploding ; 'till day-dawn
Shews him, poor wretch! near some deep precipice, 45
Or at the portal of some lonely lodge,
Once the retreat of errant knights renown'd;
Deserted now, save where the tripping elf
And ghastly goblin dance in mystic maze,
Howling enchantments: shudd'ring here he stands, 50
And all agape bewails his home forlorn.
Thus err mankind thro' life's bewilder'd ways;
Thus, or thro' ignorance or folly's guise,
Rushing t'wards Bliss they nought attain but woe.

See there yon' villager; his oxen yok'd, 55
Whistling his way he climbs the cloud-topt hill:
Easy and plain his path to Happiness:
But ask, and lo! an alien from content
The sturdy boor his rustic plaint begins;

Can I who labor out the life-long day 60
For trivial gain be happy?—and at eve
When to my shatter'd shed homeward I speed
To meet my bantling-offspring's fond embrace,
They round me clust'ring, as round thyme the bees,
Compel'd by keenest appetite demand 65
This pittance mean: and when the shades of night
Invite to soft repose my weary'd limbs,
Anon I lay me on my hurdled crib,
And sleep—but, ah! such sleep as none e'er knew,
Save whom like me keen hunger presses sore, 70
And hies him ere day-dawn to yon' bleak field
(Or bleak as yon') in dread of harder fare.
Bliss so refin'd must quicken envy's sting!
But as by contrast opposite the shades
Of various colors are determin'd best; 75
So let us leave the peasant's bitter moan,
And scan the monarch's Bliss: enthron'd he sits

And

And awes a subject world; plenty for him
 Extends her richest horn, and dove-ey'd peace
 For his fair front her choicest chaplet wreathes: 80
 (Wreathes, but, alas! it seldom shades his brow)
 Him either India courts with all her stores;
 Large his retinue and his levee vast:
 What error then? knows he not Bliss whose board
 All nature crowns, whom all mankind obeys? 85
 Ah! no; a father's tenfold fears deny
 Peace to that prince that sways the scepter well;
 And fear its torment bears. Thus dignities,
 Thus all the gilded pomp of scepter'd life
 Are spells too feeble to draw down that Bliss 90
 For which the lowly cottager laments.

O could I enter now (enthron'd he cries)
 Yon' peasant's hut and bid farewell to sway—
 But if so heav'n ordain that I must bear
 The cumb'rous weight, then grant me, heav'n, to bear

As

As once those simple sages who, by thee 96
Anointed kings puissant, fed each day
Their fleecy flocks, and glory'd to sustain
With even hand the scepter and the crook.

Nor rest we here; for various are the scenes, 100
Perplex'd the ways of life: nor regal pomp,
Nor simple peasantry alone bewail
Bliss unattain'd; ev'n he who wiser treads
The middle track pursues a flying good.
For see him on whose brow sits discontent 105
And fullen care deep-brooding; forth he goes,
The man of business call'd, and ere the morn
Peeps thro' his lattice, to his vassals each
His various work assigns; himself meanwhile
Or to inspect their labors nought remiss, 110
Or anxious to adjust his sev'ral dues,
And balance debt with debt. Nor less intent,
But with the specious hopes of speedier gains

Elate,

Elate, the sons of lucre plod their way
To mark what rise or what the stocks' decline; 115
If haply this one simple sum may prove
The fertile mother of some thousands more.
Thus doth the busy worldling spend his days,
And each impregn'd with ill — see him! he comes —
His honest front and words of fair import 120
Demand respect; but serving base intent
Elude the easy creditor, who now
(Tho' now too late) detects the wily knave,
And curses his credulity. Meanwhile
Demands, how large! solicit quick redress, 125
And rob him of repose — I know not what;
Ten thousand ills or fancy'd or sincere.
Perchance secure within a stately pile,
Rais'd by the gain that prov'd one man's undoing,
Upheld by happier fortune he proclaims 130
His feats of trade and œconomic skill.

He

He too who from one bag's prolific power
 So late of thousands dreamt, cursing his chance
 Now wakes in poverty: fallacious arts!
 Still hope and fear, the ballasts of the soul, 135
 Depress and raise them; but the wish'd-for end,
 The labor'd Happiness still shifts aside,
 And phantom-like evades their eager grasp.

But shall the wretch that claims satyric rhyme,
 Dead to mankind, to ev'ry virtue dead, 140
 Who drags a life neglected and forlorn,
 Shall he unnotic'd pass? him rather mark,
 Mark as he stalks with looks austere and wan;
 Piecemeal about him hang his tatter'd weeds,
 That now full many a tedious year have borne 145
 Th' extremes of weather—and shall bear; (he cries)
 For where, ye Gods, save in that chest o'er which
 Well-pleas'd I hang, and hourly plot to fill

With its dear mammon; say, where else can I
In all this knavish world find Happiness. 150
Yes; not a thought he knows but deep within
The narrow circuit of that chest confin'd
It centers there; he nought delighted hears
Save gold's encomiums; he regardless sees
A falling world, secure his treasur'd stores. 155
The friend may supplicate, the widow tell
Her plaintive tale, the orphan plead distress;
Unmov'd he hears, unshaken as the cliff
'Gainst the proud insults of the beating wave:
True to the last the vital hoard he hugs 160
Still closer, pile on pile compressing still.
Thank heav'n all seek not thus, howe'er all err,
All seek not Bliss in wealth exorbitant,
To good or public or domestic nought
Subservient yielding; but of minds enlarg'd 165

There

There are who, dead to int'rest and base lust
Of ill-priz'd lucre, walk in pleasure's ways.

Vig'rous as youth and jocund as the morn,
See him, ere yet o'er yonder eastern hill
Aurora spreads her saffron-veil, succinct

170

To raise the burnish'd tube: haply to course
The wily hare, or chase the bounding roe,
Hounds, horses, huntsmen wait their master's will.

Mounted, o'er hill, o'er dale the courfers scour;
Loud shouts ensue and vict'ry crowns the day.

175

Return'd, o'er plenteous viands they recount
Each past exploit and join in song and wine.

Yet some nor in the haunts of rustic Pan,
Nor in chaste Dian's quiver'd train delight;

But form'd for gallantries and court-amours,

180

In concerts, masquerades and operas,

Dance on t'wards Happiness. See! to the ball

Sallies at eve the glitt'ring, powder'd beau,
With sweets embalm'd, more potent far than those,
Tho' choicest, pour'd on Egypt's hallow'd mummies.
Close at his side, nor of her syren-charms 186
Unconscious, smiles his beauteous Dalilah;
Beauteous as if plain nature in distress
Had begg'd a blush from Titian's happy pencil.
Lo! in these paths the men of pleasure tread, 190
In that the miser: he, fond wretch! adores
Gold as his God, thence seeking Happiness.
Thus they by long debauch and lawless mirth,
He thus by pressing penury and fears,
Cut short the thread of life; destructive ways! 195
Thwarting that Happiness they both pursue!

Say then, sweet maid, O tell us in what clime
Thou deign'st thy residence; what fay'rite soil
Delights thee most, or if that soil be heaven;

That

That our terrestrial searches find thee not 200
Howe'er importunate: say what thy form;
Or whether Proteus-like thou chang'st at will
From this to that; or if a flitting sprite
Thou glid'st before us and we hunt a shade.
But stay; perhaps the world's intruding cares, 205
And business ill-secur'd may bar our Bliss,
And drive us thus adrift. Then since there are
Who, wide sequester'd from the busy world,
In cloyster'd solitude and studious ease
Float down the stream of life; here let us search, 210
Here search with care, if haply we may find
In these retreats the path that leads to good.
Behold him then! deep-musing in his cell
Sits the recluse, and roves from page to page.
Around him stand, high-pil'd in meet array, 215
Th' unwieldy pomp of letter'd folios.

Fresh

Fresh from the tool some newly-trim'd display
Their splendid fronts and ask observance; some,
The boast of better days, antique and rare,
Rest in obscurity, untouch'd, unseen, 220
Save when the curious antiquary', in search
Of some quaint tale or adage obsolete,
Grasps the rich prize and thinks it luxury.
Around them hairy-fine Aracne's web
Is spun, and thick inlay of murky tinct 225
Diffus'd thro' ev'ry page: for these have felt
The ravages of time, and pamper'd long
With rich repast th' insinuating worm.
'Mid' these he spends his solitary hours,
And o'er the fields of mystic science roams 230
By day, by night; from these sagacious culls
The choicest truths t'enrich his native stores.
But, ah! this thirst for knowledge, and this gain

Of

Of ampler wisdom but subverts that Bliss
He fondly seeks, and baffles ev'ry aim. 235

For say; by all our knowledge gain we what,
Save that we know ourselves more weak, more vain,
Degen'rate, impotent; from good averse,
Propense to ill? sad knowledge! such as must
Ensure us wretched beyond ignorance. 240

Add what by long intension of close thought
Enslave the soul and reason's empire shake,
Cephalic pains and slow consumption's wan,
Fevers and all the ghastly train of death.
On us they rush, and ere the thread of life 245
Is fairly run cut off all means to Bliss.

Thus as I sat contemplative and sad,
Pond'ring the devious ways of man perverse,
Forthwith the god of sleep wav'd o'er my brows
His opiate-rod and lull'd me to repose. 250

Nor

Nor long ere buoy'd on high methought I rode
Sublime in air, on heav'nly pinions pois'd.
Far from my ravish'd sight vanish'd this earth,
And with it all its cares. At length I rested
Safe on a spacious plain with turf o'erspread, 255
Fresh-sprung and green as after vernal showers:
The bleating flocks and cattle far and wide
Browsing in peace diversify'd the scene.
Flow'rs of all hues, kind nature's choicest growth,
Shed their rich fragrance o'er th' enamel'd glade. 260
Adown the sloping lawns salubrious stream'd
The sweetly-tinkling rills, limpid and pure:
O'er them the pendent willow wav'd its head
Imbrown'd with foliage, and rustled thanks
To the soft zephyrs' breeze: on ev'ry spray 265
The feather'd warblers usher'd in the dawn
With songs of gratitude, delight, and love.

The

The sea's remotest murmurs charm'd unseen
My ravish'd ear, my roving eye survey'd
Cities far distant tow'ring 'mid' the clouds. 270
What country this I said, or seem'd to say?
So lovely sure it looks the land of Bliss.
Thus while on these delicious scences I fed
My mind contemplative, methought not far
A goodly edifice display'd its bulk 275
Majestically simple: to it led
By easy' ascent a broad umbrageous vista.
Approach'd, the ample pile look'd solitude
That quicken'd dread within. Here while I fought
And, urg'd by impulse strong, long time revolv'd 280
Where best to enter, lo! mysterious truth!
Spontaneous, ere I touch'd, on easy hinge
Turn'd the huge valves, and to my view disclos'd
An ample dome, rotund; its vaulted roof

D

At

At a small aperture pour'd forth the light 285
That beam'd from heav'n direct. High in the midst
An altar breath'd rich incense: on each side,
To right and left two files perplex'd and dark
Winded with serpent-maze: I to the left
Turn'd, and advent'rous thro' its lab'rinth walk'd 290
In wild amaze; till a fair virgin form
Advanc'd flow-moving, rob'd in purest white:
Her looks were love, composure, innocence,
Here as I pass'd delighted, with soft touch
My pliant hand she rais'd, and silent led 295
With easy grace strait to that other ill
My step nought ling'ring: for methought we pass'd
Thro' pure expanse of joy. Yet still one fear
Earth-born and sluggish oft recoil'd, to know
Whither might tend this friendly guidance, or 300
What issue close the scene; mysterious sure!

Onward!

Onward she led, till, where an iv'ry-throne
 Its polish'd front display'd, of work divine,
 We paus'd; for worthier admiration nought
 By mortal eye was ken'd, or worthier love: 305
 Here all that or in earth or heav'n is deem'd
 Loveliest and best, complete in one we saw,
 One heav'n-born fair; for say, what less than heav'n
 Could form such bright perfection, or contain
 Such bright perfection form'd? A golden globe 310
 Her left sustain'd, her right a silver-wand.
 Veil'd was her face; not giv'n to gaze at large
 Where peace and innocence and love divine,
 Smiles unremitted and extatic joys
 Shone forth unveil'd too much for man to bear, 315
 Lovely my guide, but her's were human charms;
 Transporting these, for these were all divine.
 Before the throne with suppliant knee I bow'd.

My soul with raptures high, unknown till now,
 Glow'd as I gaz'd, and all was Bliss within. 320
 Myſterious then methought my fair one ſaid,
 Here find—and ſaying vaniſh'd from my ſight.
 Nor long ere in celeftial ſplendors clad
 The goddeſs roſe; and inſtant ev'ry ſound
 Of footſtep or of voice remote or near 325
 Ceas'd; ſolemn ſilence o'er the vaulted roof
 Sat brooding with ſtill wing; ſave where ſhe yielded
 To the melodious ſounds of harps attun'd
 By thoſe fair virtues that incircling ſtood
 Around the throne; who in ſweet concert join'd 330
 Their vocal pow'rs to hymn their goddeſs' praiſe.
 Nor long had ceas'd, when to my ear erect
 Theſe gladſome truths the heav'nly queen proclaim'd;
 Welcome, fair youth, to theſe our bleſt abodes;
 Becalm thy ſoul; and know if ought can ſooth 335
 The

The furrow'd brow of care, if ought can cast
Endless oblivion on the woes of man,
My presence so divine, my words so sweet,
Sweet as the nectar'd dew that chear each morn
The drooping pansy; sweet as thou shalt hear; 340
These in lethean streams shall lave the guilt
Of past misdoings, and refine thy soul
With truths sublime and undissembled good.
Know me the promis'd Bliss, the labor'd end,
Thy patroness, thy theme, and now thy joy : 345
Behold me Happiness ; veil'd as I am
Thou see'st me more than mortal, but to see
Unveil'd befits not, since mortality
Can ill approach divinity like mine.
The nymph, that sibyl fair who hither led 350
Thy tim'rous step is worthy all thy love.
Her name Content; her office to proclaim

My

My will to man. Know (for I've much to tell)
 This hallow'd dome, thus venerably good,
 My temple call'd; here my behests obey. 355
 Those various cells mosaic, on each side
 That sacred avenue thro' which thou cam'st,
 This goodly tribe contain. There Piety,
 Whom now before my throne with knee inclin'd
 Submits thou see'st, know that her blest abode; 360
 That Liberty's; see her, in front she stands
 Low at my feet; her hand a clarion bears.
 But mark the grot with flow'rets richly crown'd;
 Beauty and Love, twin-sisters there enjoy
 Sweet intercourse, eternal; next them see 365
 Hope with up-lifted eye; there hoary Truth
 Tow'rs opposite; beyond them view firm Faith
 And rigid Justice joining hands; there Peace
 Sits olive-crown'd; there meek-ey'd Modesty,

‡ Observing

Observing nought, herself observ'd by all. 370

These and a thousand more or execute

My will on earth or at my footstool bow.

But to sublimer truths thine ear incline.

Thy close researches, thy assiduous zeal

Thro' life's bewilder'd ways in quest of me 375

Long have I mark'd, and marking long bewail'd

(If Happiness can wail) the wild pursuit:

Forsooth thou seek'st me as an earthly good,

And in thy sublunary sphere do'st hope

To trace my footstep where I never trod. 380

Here I upbraid thy folly; folly? more;

Error perverse, ambition insolent.

Seek Happiness on earth! say, can it be?

Can creatures stor'd with reason wander so?

Can man, the image of his maker wise, 385

Rove disconcerted thro' a world of woe

Im

In quest of Happiness? delusive thought!
For know, vain vagrant, not thy closest search
Thro' earth's wide bounds can her investigate
Who heav'n inhabits and diffuseth there 390
The plenitude of Bliss; for Bliss am I.
These wild essays, this ill-directed zeal
But draw thee nearer to perdition's gulf
Sunk by disquietude's forlorn abettors.
Thus life, that life which to the wise man proves 395
An easy passage to a happier clime,
Becomes to thee one desert waste of woe.
Think not 'mid' pleasure, opulence or power
I deign my residence: it cannot be;
These are the gilded toys that please weak minds, 400
And like the wily adder's speckled skin
Attract with specious glare; but sudden shoot
Their venom'd stings and taint pure nature's draught.

Fortune's

Fortune's best fav'rite can but seek, not claim
 My presence meritorious more than he 405
 That turns the soil for daily stipend mean;
 Would'st thou enjoy thy fill of life, that life
 Such as a wise man would not blush to live;
 Enjoy all I can give or thou receive;
 Let her who hither led thee ever lead, 410
 Content my darling; in whom shines express
 (If ought of heav'nly can shine forth express
 In earthly frame) my image so sublime.
 She best can ballast ev'ry troubled thought,
 And sweetly waft thee thro' the ways of life 415
 Not wanting good, such as shall best beseem
 While in this tent of animated clay
 Thou hold'st thy sojourn. She can strait conduct
 To peace, and joy, and love, thy devious step,
 To piety, and all this goodly band 420
 That serves mankind commission'd. Thus those ills,

Transposed

E

Which

Which like infernal furies haunt mankind,
 And stare them out of Bliss, will ne'er approach
 Thy dwelling-place, or of their stings disarm'd
 Approach innoxious: for what pow'r can shake
 The soul that on Contentment's solid base
 Stands proof 'gainst ev'ry storm?—thus shalt thou feel
 Applauding conscience proclaim peace within,
 And ripen for eternity thee ripe in years.
 Nor longer then shalt wish, but taste that Bliss
 For which the wise man hopes, implores and lives.
 Then, when t'wards heav'n's empyreal domes up-borne
 On angel-wing, thou enter'st heav'n's abodes,
 Absorb'd in full fruition hope no more
 Shall gleam obscure, but Bliss be all in all.
 There hail me Happiness, glad to receive
 Her darling-sons, and o'er their face diffuse
 Th' eternal beams of light and life divine.

Transported

Transported beyond measure at these truths,
So great, so good, ineffable, methought 440
Impatient of such joys I bounded high
And rous'd each raptur'd sense. But, ah! what grief,
What sad deceit to find such scenes a dream.
Yet still the heav'nly accents unimpair'd
Dwelt on my ear, and left me in suspense
Whether to deem me guest of heav'n, enroll'd
'Mid' those by poets feign'd the demigods.
Such scenes I pass'd; which, whether fancy form'd
Or judgement weigh'd, instill'd one truth, to seek
Content on earth, and, persevering, hope
The promis'd crown of Happiness in heaven.

F I N I S.

Transported beyond measure at these truths,

044

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